

INTERNATIONAL LABOR RIGHTS FUND

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HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER DEPORTED FROM THE PHILIPPINES

PHILIPPINES GOVERNMENT MAINTAINS BLACKLIST OF HUMAN RIGHTS SUPPORTERS

Washington, DC: Brian Campbell, Staff Attorney for the International Labor Rights Fund (ILRF) was detained at an airport in Manila on December 6, 2006 and denied access to the country because of his support for Filipino human rights activists.

After presenting his passport to airport officials upon arrival in the Philippines, Campbell was questioned about his past trips to the country on fact-finding missions. Campbell had traveled to the Philippines in April on an International Solidarity Mission sponsored by the Center for Trade Union and Human Rights and the Ecumenical Institute of Labor Education and Research where he met with several families of victims of political killings including Mrs. Luz Fortuna, the wife of Diosdado “Ka Fort” Fortuna, a murdered union organizer.

A security officer showed Campbell a list of names of international human rights advocates who would not be allowed into the country. Also on the list were members of the National Lawyers Guild who had recently published an article about the Philippines as well as a number of priests. The existence of the blacklist has been confirmed by Immigration Commissioner Alipio Fernandez and Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez in an Associated Press article published on December 7th.

Campbell was traveling to the Philippines at the invitation of several Filipino human rights organizations to gather further information about the situation in the Philippines. As Campbell said, “You can rest assure that I am being denied entry into the Philippines as just another small part of the government’s concerted long-standing campaign to silence the critics of the Arroyo regime and the continuing political killings.”

The Philippines remains one of the most dangerous countries for unionized workers and human rights activists. From the Chong Won garment factory where workers have been on strike after management violated their rights to freedom of association, denied workers bathroom breaks and forced workers to take on 24 hour shifts, to the murder of Bishop Alberto Ramento of the Philippines Independent Church, a supporter of striking workers in the Cavite Economic Zone, the government of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has grown increasingly repressive over the past few years. Arroyo has been

supported by the Bush Administration and the US government announced just last month intentions to pursue a Free Trade Agreement with the Philippines.

Despite the attacks on human rights advocates, the International Labor Rights Fund will continue to join our allies around the world to demand protection for human rights activists in the Philippines.

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